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Implementation report of CMM 2022-04 in accordance with paragraph 11

WCPFC-TCC20-2024-DP06

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Submitted by Japan

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1. Overview

Japan recognizes that sharks are important fishery resources and play an important role in the marine ecosystem as higher-level predators. In several regions in Japan where sharks are landed in a decent amount on a constant basis, shark products have been fully utilized. The shark meat is used as a common cooking ingredient, skins are used as materials for high-grade leather products and cooking apparatus, and bones are used for pharmaceutical products. Sharks are used with little waste in Japan.

The Fishery Act and related regulations require distant-water tuna longliners, offshore tuna longliners, and coastal tuna longliners to possess all parts of the shark excepting head, guts and skins, to the point of the first landing.

In addition, the Fishery Act and related regulations require that, in the WCPFC convention area, tuna longliners retain all sharks with fins naturally attached to the carcass. As an exception, however, the Fishery Act and related regulations allow fishermen to take either of alternative measures stipulated in paragraph 9 of CMM2022-04.

The Fisheries Agency confirmed through survey and inspection activities that, in 2023, some Japanese tuna longliners used one of the alternatives, option (3) on paragraph 9 of CMM2022-04 (i.e. Use of identical tags attached to the shark carcass and its corresponding fins to be stored in a manner easily identified by inspectors etc.) .

This report serves as Japan's report required by paragraph 11 of CMM 2022-04, on the implementation of paragraphs 8 and 9.

2. Compliance and monitoring

The Fishery Act and related regulations require fishermen to report all catch of shark species including incidental catch. Through this report, the Fisheries Agency can identify which fishing vessels caught what species of sharks during their trip.

The Fisheries Agency conducted port inspections into two longliners that employed one of the alternatives at landing ports. During the port inspections, the inspectors checked fins, bodies and records which show where the fins and corresponding bodies were stored, and no technical difficulty to check the compliance has so far been recognized, although there were rooms for improvement in the implementation (clearer display of tags etc.) for which the Fisheries Agency gave the fisherman advised.

3. Conclusion

Japanese tuna longliners generally possess sharks with fins naturally attached in the WCPFC convention area, however, some vessels employ alternative measures as stipulated in accordance with CMM2022-04. The Japanese authority has been conducting inspections into the implementation of the alternative measures and has found no difficulty in checking the compliance.